THE LIBERAL PLATFORM

DISCUSSED BY

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AT BARRIE

In revising his speech at Barrie the Premier eliminated as far as practicable the material used in the speech at Napanee. Some planks in the Liberal Platform that were merely referred to at Barrie are considered at some length, and some new matter introduced.

I propose now to ask your careful attention to the deliverance of the great Liberal Convention which met in Toronto on the 23rd and 24th of November last. In point of numbers, influence and character, this Convention exceeded any assemblage of a similar kind in the history of Canada, and accordingly its conclusions on all public questions are entitled to the greatest weight.

1. Education and Agriculture.

At the very threshold of the intellectual prosperity of the Province, the Convention faced the subject of Education, believing that, if we are to be a high-minded and progressive people, there must be no lack of educational facilities for every class, calling and profession in the Province. The Convention particularly accentuated the diffusion of Technical Education and Domestic Science, one having regard to the development of our industries and the training of skilled labor for our factories, and the other to the home comforts and healthfulness of the whole community. In both of these departments much progress has been made in the last ten years; both subjects are taught in our three

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normal schools, and buildings specially devoted to Technical subjects have been erected in Toronto, Berlin, Stratford and Brantford. Manual Training is taught in 26 schools and Domestic Science in 13 schools. The Sir William Macdonald Institute, at Guelph, taken over by the Government early in December, supplies instruction to over a hundred farmers' daughters in Household Science, and is a standing proof of the confidence of this great educational benefactor in our Ontario Government. The buildings, of which he made a free gift, cost over $170,000.

In the department of higher Technical Education and Engineering, the School of Practical Science in Toronto is by far the largest technical school in Canada, and has grown with astonishing rapidity. The attendance in 1883 was only 11 pupils; this year it is 460. The buildings and equipment have cost nearly half a million dollars, and its graduates are counted among the best engineers in the profession.

Agriculture.

In agriculture the Conservatives simply endorsed the methods adopted by the Government for the improvement of every branch of this comprehensive subject. The undoubted prosperity of the Ontario farmer is largely due to the efforts of the Agriculture Department for the improvement of stock, instruction in dairying and fruit-growing, and the diffusion on a generous scale of practical instruction through Farmer's Institutes, bulletins, and departmental reports. No one now doubts the success of the Agricultural College, which in 1874 was attended by 34 students, now it has an attendance of 728. The Dairy Schools at Kingston, Guelph and Strathroy have returned their cost probably 50 fold, and the Winter Fairs at Ottawa and Guelph recently established have been received with universal commendation. It is no exaggeration to say that the work of the Department of Agriculture has added millions to the wealth of the Province.

In these two Departments what has the country learned from the Opposition? Practically nothing. Mr. Whitney declares himself in favor of an Educational Council elected by the teachers. For five years we have had such a council on which the teaching profession is represented. This council has full control over all the examinations conducted by the Department, and over the authorization of text-books for Public and High Schools. What would be gained by changing its constitution Mr. Whitney has not yet explained. Looking over the various amendments to the School Act for the last thirty years, I challenge the Opposition to point to any measure of change of any importance either to pupils or teachers for which they can claim credit. The school system of Ontario has attained its present state of perfection through the unaided efforts of the Government. No suggestion ever came from the Opposition in advance for the establishment of kindergartens, continuation classes, technical schools, or university federation.

Free Text-Books.

Mr. Whitney suggested at Napanee that text-books should be published at cost, or if that were not practicable that the Government should publish them at no cost. Even here the Government has been in advance of Mr. Whitney. For years School Boards have been authorized to supply the pupils with free text-books, and several School Boards have exercised this power. As a proof of the amazing cheapness of the text-books now in use, free text-books in the city of Toronto cost only eight cents per pupil, whereas in Massachusetts the average cost was $1.62; in Detroit, 65 cents; in Washington, D.C., 45 cents; in Philadelphia, $1.02.

Last session of Parliament, boards of rural school trustees were authorized to supply free readers to the pupils, the Government undertaking to pay half the cost. Already several public schools have taken advantage of this provision in the law.

Minister of Education.

It should also be remembered that the Conservative party for many years condemned the substitution of a Minister of Education for a Chief Superintendent, but so indifferent was the response to their objections that for several years they have ceased all agitation on this score.

2. Purity of Elections.

The Convention placed itself very decidedly on record with regard to corrupt practices. Analyzing the resolution adopted, it condemned (1) Bribery of the electors by any corrupt consideration; (2) Tampering with ballots or ballot-boxes in any shape or form; and (3) The closing of election trials without a full investigation of the corrupt practices alleged to have been committed.

The Convention also recommended the disfranchisement of constituencies where it was believed the interests of public morality required it. No excuse or apology was made for the offences committed by members of their own party. In fact, if anything, greater displeasure was shown towards the offending Liberal than towards the offending Conservative, and there was but one desire expressed, that the whole body politic, irrespective of party, should be cleansed of all corrupt practices. In this decision of the Convention every Liberal will rejoice, and so far as the Government is concerned no effort will be spared to carry out the spirit and the letter of the resolution adopted.

The Conservative Conference.

Turning to the Conservative Conference, the contrast is astonishing if not painful. Neither did Mr. Whitney nor any of his supporters express a word of dissatisfaction with the corruption shown by the

Election Courts to have prevailed in the Conservative party. Strong language was used with regard to their opponents; credit was withheld for what we attempted to do—in bringing offenders to justice. No mention was made of the fact that during my time 47 offenders were prosecuted, several fined and some sent to jail, nor was any mention made of the fact that the law was recently amended so as to secure greater certainty in the conviction of election offences; all was denunciation of their opponents and acquittal by silence of themselves; no resolution of their conference gave the slightest clue as to their future intentions and so we are left to assume that as a party they have acquiesced in the misdeeds disclosed in South Ontario and in the four or five other constituencies opened by the Election Courts for corrupt practices.

3. Railway Taxation and Assessment.

Among the great corporations that have grown up in the country in the last 30 years, the railways own the greatest amount of real property and consequently share most in the protection and benefits of our municipal system. In cities and towns railway property is assessed as other property and may be said to pay a reasonable share of municipal taxation. In rural districts railroads, that is the right of way, are assessed on the same basis as adjoining lands used for farming purposes. Having regard to the value of the franchise and the large earnings of our railways it has been felt for many years that their taxes for municipal purposes were inadequate and far below the taxes paid by private property holders. In 1898, the small tax of $5 per mile was imposed by the Government which was increased in 1904 to a tax of $30 per mile in the organized part of the Province and to $20 in the unorganized: and where the road was double tracked a tax of $10 per mile was imposed for the extra track.

The Pettypiece Bill.

Under the law of 1898, the railways yielded the Province a revenue of $34,998; in 1904, the revenue amounted to $187,000. Mr. Pettypiece, the member for Lambton, who studied the methods of Railway taxation prevailing in the United States, introduced a Bill a few sessions ago by which it was proposed to apply to Ontario railroads a new system of taxation and from which a much larger revenue would be derived. This Bill was referred by the House, in 1903, to the Special Committee on the Assessment Act, which declined to accept either the methods or the principle which it contained. Last session Mr. Pettypiece re-introduced the Bill when, to the surprise of everybody, it was found that the members of the Opposition who opposed it on the Assessment Committee, evidently in the hope of embarrassing the Government, spoke in its defence. As the Government had a measure of its own on the same question, and as Mr.

Pettypiece's Bill involved such a radical change, the Government considered it advisable to ask the House to refer the whole question of Railway taxation to a Royal Commission, with a view to such action another session as the report of the Commission might warrant. This view prevailed, and a commission consisting of Mr. Pettypiece, without remuneration, Judge Bell of Kent, and Prof. Adam Short, of Queen's University, was appointed. It is needless to say that the Opposition resisted the appointment of a Commission, as they were evidently far less anxious to improve the system of Railway taxation than they were to embarrass Mr. Pettypiece and the Government.

The Convention has, however, placed itself on record as to the general question, and it will be the duty of the Government to work out, possibly, a new system of Railway taxation, from which the municipalities may derive greater advantages than under the present system, and which will not do any injustice to Railway Corporations whose primary object is to pay a dividend, although incidently they contribute largely to the development of the country. One thing is clear, however, that whatever may be the action of the Government on Railway taxation, the Opposition are merely imitators of a policy they did not suggest, and which they are anxious to use more for political purposes than for the benefit of the public.

4. Extension of the Temiskaming Railway.

In view of the importance of opening up New Ontario, and particularly of gaining access to the Clay Belt North of the height of land, containing 16,000,000 acres, the Government projected a railroad from North Bay to New Liskeard a distance of 112 miles. From this point access could be obtained to a large area of good agricultural land and also to valuable timber of various descriptions. When the project was submitted to the House, it was received with very scant favor by the Opposition. An attempt was made to embarrass the Government with regard to the meagre character of the surveys, the absence of a subsidy from the Dominion Government and similar criticisms of an unfriendly character. On the 11th of March, 1902, a Motion was made by Mr. Powell of Ottawa, seconded by Mr. Carnegie, expressing the regrets of the Opposition as to the action of the Government. Had the Motion carried, the Bill would have been rejected and to-day we would have no railroad into New Ontario.

The Convention took the view that the extension of this road was of the greatest importance, and that at the earliest moment connection should be made with the Grand Trunk Pacific 100 miles still further north from New Liskeard, or over 200 miles in all, and later, when the facts would warrant, that the road might be pushed on to Hudson's Bay.

But the most important deliverance of the Convention was the suggestion that town sites on the Provincial Railway and on the Grand

Trunk Pacific should be surveyed by the Crown and disposed of in the interests of the public treasury. As the distance between the Eastern and Western boundary of Ontario is at least 750 miles, and the Government Railway is 200 miles in length, there is here a large field for the location of town sites where they will be of the greatest advantage to new settlements and where they can yield the largest revenue to the Province. The Canadian Pacific, it is said, has realized $11,000,000 from the sale of town sites between Winnipeg and Vancouver. Whether the Province will realize one third of that sum is perhaps of less importance than that the Government should control the leasing of the water powers and the planting of settlements through the Northern districts of the Province.

5. Timber and Minerals for the Settlers.

The declaration of the Convention in favor of the settler was generous and outspoken. The Convention declared "that every *bona fide* purchaser or locatee of Crown lands shall on taking possession of such lands have the right to cut for his own use or for sale, every description of timber thereon, pine only excepted, and that pending the issue of his patent, the settler shall have the right to cut and take, free of charge, so much of the pine as he may require for building and fencing and other uses, and that on completion of his settlement duties, the purchaser or locatee shall receive a patent from the Crown without reservation of pine, mines or minerals."

This statement is so clear as to require little or no explanation. The settler's privileges are plainly set forth, and what is most important to him when he gets his patent, he owns everything on the soil or under the soil, whether it be timber or minerals. At present minerals are exempted from the patent, even of agricultural lands. It is proposed to abolish this exemption.

In order, however, that settlers may not inadvertently locate on mineral lands, homestead inspectors are to be appointed in the unorganized districts. Whenever an application is made for settlement, the homestead inspector is to report at once to the Crown Lands' Agent as to the character of the lands in question. If they are mineral lands or lands more valuable for re-forestration purposes than for agriculture, the settler will be excluded, as it would be no kindness to permit him to settle on lands from which he would be unable to make a living. In this way the timber lands would be preserved as a source of perpetual income, and the mineral lands would be open to the prospector. Carrying out the idea of the Convention, a few homestead inspectors have already been appointed. It is expected by this means that the delay, which often occurred in the issue of patents, will be prevented and that as soon as settlement duties are performed, the settler will be granted his full title without any reservation whatever.

On this point the conference called by Mr. Whitney adopted a resolution almost identical with that passed by the Liberal Conven-

:on, showing, as in many other cases, that the Opposition has been obliged to go to the Liberals to make up even the appearance of such a policy as they may have.

6 Provincial Charters.

The Convention was very emphatic with regard to the right of the Province to control Charters for purely Provincial purposes, and in the Resolution adopted on this point the old fight for provincial rights was distinctly outlined. Under the B.N.A. Act, all matters pertaining to Municipal government were placed under the control of the Provincial Legislature. It has happened, however, that some Companies have obtained Charters of incorporation at Ottawa overriding the rights of municipalities. For instance, the Bell Telephone Company, incorporated by the Dominion Parliament, has been declared by the Privy Council to have a right to plant its poles and string its wires over the streets of any city or town without consulting the municipal authorities. It also happens that railway corporations under the guise that "they are for the general advantage of Canada" seek for similar powers. For thirty years the Liberal Party has defended the rights of the Province and the municipalities also, and it would be the duty of the Government, acting upon this Resolution to resist all encroachment upon Provincial or Municipal rights by the Dominion Government. Important as this matter is to every municipality in the Province, the Conservative Conference passed it over in silence.

7. Pine and Pulp Wood Lands.

The Convention indicated very clearly its policy as to the future of our pine lands, namely, that where practicable only matured pine should be cut, that all lands adapted for re-forestration should be turned into forest reserves. The Government of the Province has already gone a great length in this direction as the following list of reserves, representing an aggregate of nearly 7,000,000 acres, shows :—

In Frontenac and Addington	80,000	acres.
North Shore Lake Superior	45,000	"
Temagami	3,776,000	"
Mississaga River	1,920,000	"
Algonquin Park	1,101,000	"
Rondeau Park	5,000	"

The public treasury has been benefited since Confederation to the extent of nearly $40,000,000 of money from crown lands. Under proper conditions there is no reason why the revenue should be seriously affected.

In regard to pulp wood lands, the Convention, while approving of the policy of the Government in the past as the only practicable way of interesting capital and starting a great industry, were of the opinion

that where pulp lands and water powers were contributary one to the other that both should be put up at auction and sold to the highest bidder. It required no little effort, in the first instance, to secure the necessary capital to test the quality of our pulp wood, and also to test the Canadian market for the consumption of Canadian pulp. In all, seven concessions have already been granted by the Government, three of which are working very satisfactorily :—

(1) The Sault Ste. Marie Pulp and Paper Works, in which $1,000,000 have been invested and which produce 100 tons of pulp per day.

(2) The Sturgeon Falls Pulp and Paper Works, in which $1,600,000 have been invested and which produce 40 tons of paper per day.

(3) The Spanish River Works, in which $700,000 have been invested and which are capable of producing 100 tons of pulp wood per day.

The first two mentioned works are now in operation; the last mentioned will be opened early next spring.

The most important pulp districts of the Province lie north of the Height of Land. It was estimated by the explorations made a few years ago that that northern district contained 288,000,000 cords of pulp wood. All pulp wood cut on Crown lands pays a royalty of 40 cents a cord, and cannot be exported from Canada. Pulp wood cut on lands located for settlement, whether the patent has issued or not, are free of royalty and can be disposed of to any purchaser the same as any other commodity.

8. Provincial Commission for the Protection of Municipalities.

There has grown up within the last few years a strong tendency to capitalize companies far beyond the amount of working capital necessary for their operation. Even railway corporations are anxious to float their bonds for a larger sum than the revenue of the company would warrant. Municipalities, too, in order to develop local industries, or it may be to get advantages from enterprises of a private or a public character are sometimes inclined to assume obligations burdensome to the ratepayers.

The Convention, realizing the danger to the credit of the country as well as to property owners in municipalities, suggested the appointment of a Provincial Commission with power to look carefully into every obligation of the description mentioned that came before Parliament, and after a close scrutiny of the standing of the corporation or municipality, as the case may be, to advise the House, or it may be the Private Bills Committee, with regard to the propriety or impropriety of the legislation proposed. Such a Board would no doubt be an effective check upon monopolies and franchises that might interfere

with municipal rights or might prejudice the future prosperity of the municipality. Similar Boards have been found very useful in Great Britain and in the United States.

9. The Labour Question.

On the question of labour there was but one opinion expressed in the Convention, viz., that any form of labour legislation that would improve the condition of the working classes, give them greater security as to wages, reduce the risk of injury from defective machinery or unsanitary conditions, was entitled to the heartiest support of the Liberal Party.

There are now on the Statute Books of the Province no less than 33 Acts respecting labour.

So comprehensive has been the labour legislation of the Province that Mr. A. W. Wright, organizer for the Conservative party, admitted that we had better labour laws in Ontario than were to be found in any state in the American Union.

The convention in its resolution pointed out two or three things still requiring attention :—

(1) That the branches of the public service such as the Bureau of Labour and the inspection of factories should be united.

(2) That in conjunction with the work of colonization of New Ontario, a Minister of Labour should be appointed.

(3) That, if possible, better methods of conciliation for the settlement of labour disputes should be devised.

(4) That care should be taken to prevent unskilled alien and prison labour from competing with free labour.

These are matters of great importance to the working classes, and these might properly be supplemented with the establishment of a Bureau of Labour maintained principally by the Government for the purpose of watching the labour market, finding out where labour, skilled or unskilled, was most required and directing where it could be found and placed. In this way factories need not be running short for want of help, and the labour market would not necessarily be congested at any place because of a surplus of labour.

How to meet strikes is a more difficult problem. Labour Unions exercise a great deal of power at the present time. They have been most helpful to the labouring man, and should be encouraged in their efforts to secure adequate wages and improve his social condition. The loss arising from strikes is severely felt by the employer of labour, but perhaps still more severely by the families of the strikers. There is no doubt that if the misunderstandings that sometimes lead to strikes were submitted to a Board of Conciliation in their early stages, some strikes that have inflicted terrible suffering as well as have caused great financial loss could be avoided. Mr. Latchford

introduced a Bill for this purpose last Session, but owing to his absence from illness for a good part of the Session, he was unable to push it through. No doubt the matter will receive early attention at some future Session.

10. Minister of Colonization and Labour:

The settlement of New Ontario is one of the great problems before the Government. Already but 26,000,000 acres out of the 130.000,000 composing the area of the Province have passed to the hands of private owners. Over three-quarters of the whole area of the Province is still in the Crown. Manitoba and the West are filling up to a certain extent at the expense of Old Ontario. We have millions of acres of wooded lands as fertile as the best prairie land of the west, with climatic conditions equally good and capable of sustaining a population of at least one or two millions. Owing to the tardy growth of our population as compared with Quebec, we lost six seats by the last census in the House of Commons, and we are liable every decennial period to further losses. The settlement, therefore, of the Province is not purely a local question but one of Dominion concern. To that end the Government projected the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway. To that end over three millions of money have been expended on Colonization Roads. The construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific offers a golden opportunity for settlement, extending over a distance of 750 miles through the middle of the Clay Belt North of the height of land.

So impressed was the Convention with the importance of this task that it recommended the appointment of a Minister of colonization, whose chief duties would be to invite settlers from abroad and to preserve to New Ontario the surplus population of Old Ontario. The Department of Labour was to be associated with such a Minister, so that in inviting immigrants special care could be taken not to encroach upon the labour market either by unsuitable labour or by more settlers than the country could properly absorb. The project is an ambitious one of filling up the hinterland of the Province, and the Liberal Party is prepared to assist in such a vast undertaking.

In the Conservative platform there is practically no reference to New Ontario or to the importance of filling it up with an industrious and frugal population.

11. Temperance Reforms.

The subject of temperance was so fully discussed in my reply to the manifesto of the Alliance that it is not necessary to enlarge upon it here, nor is it my purpose to discuss it at any great length at any other meeting.

The convention has expressed itself in favour of the following:—

(1) That any legislation which would afford a well grounded hope of restraining and curtailing the drinking habit would be desirable.

(2) That the consumption of intoxicating liquors should, as far as practicable, be reduced.

(3) That mere drinking resorts should be closed.

(4) That the sale of liquors on Sundays and during illegal hours should be prohibited.

(5) That the license law should be rigorously enforced in every particular.

(6) That municipalities should have power to close bars and shops under what is known as Local Option by a vote taken on the petition of twenty-five per cent. of the ratepayers, without reference to the Municipal Council.

(7) That Government control might be substituted for the present license system in the case of shops.

(8) That municipalities should have power by Local Option to shorten the hours in which liquors could be sold.

(9) That the electors of any municipality, by vote, might reduce the number of licenses.

(10) That no new licenses should be issued in unorganized Ontario for all time to come.

(11) That the Government should take charge of the necessary sales for medicinal purposes.

(12) That in granting land for hotel sites in New Ontario it should be stipulated that no liquor should be sold in them.

(13) That no new licenses should be granted in license municipalities except on the petition of fifty per cent. of the municipal electors of the polling-subdivision where it is desired.

(14) That a license holder shall forfeit his license for a second offence.

These various amendments to the Liquor Act are clear and definite, and would signify, if adopted, a great advance in temperance and moral reform.

Mr. Whitney on Temperance.

Mr. Whitney in his speech at the Conference declared himself in favour of reducing the number of licenses, but to what extent he did not say. He declared himself in favour of removing licenses from political control, but how he was to do this, he did not say, and he also declared himself in favour of the better enforcement of the License Act. The Conservative Conference, however, was not quite as definite as Mr. Whitney for they simply passed a colourless resolution in the fol-

lowing terms :—"That this Conference in recognizing that abuses exist in connection with the liquor traffic places itself on record as being in full sympathy with all well-directed efforts to promote temperance and moral reform."

A Resolution like this might be adopted by the License Victuallers' Association or by the inmates of the penitentiary and have quite as much meaning as it had on the Minutes of the Conference. According to *The Mail* report Mr. Whitney said at Napanee that "if by the raising of my little finger I could bring about prohibition, then prohibition we would have." His statement according to *The Globe* was "If I could by lifting my little finger abolish off the earth intoxicating liquor, I would lift that finger." Mr. Whitney had an opportunity, when the Liquor Act of 1902 was before the House, of prohibiting the sale of liquor in Ontario, as far as the Province had jurisdiction, but he not only did not raise his little finger in that case but he spoke with great vehemence against it and nearly all his followers in the House followed his example.

That public opinion wants advanced temperance legislation is evident from the reduction of liquor licenses from over 6,000 in 1874 to less than 3,000 in 1904, and no man who wishes well of his country, particularly to its young men and women, would hesitate to support any measure that would promote temperance and curtail the evil effects of the drinking habits of society.

12. Public Utilities.

The ownership by municipalities, and in some cases by the Government, of public utilities, has been for many years the avowed policy of the Liberal Party. Already the right has been conferred upon municipalities to control the public service of water, heat, gas, electric light, telephones, street railways, public parks, libraries, etc., and the Government has extended this principle to the ownership of the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway.

The Convention affirmed its approval of this policy and expressed itself in favor of any amendments to existing laws which would make it easier, if necessary, for municipalities to purchase private interests in such services for the benefit of the taxpayers. The Convention also expressed itself as opposed to perpetual franchises and placed thirty years as the limit at which a municipality should have the right to surrender control of any public utility. Already about thirty municipalities own the services I have mentioned, and in most cases have purchased them through the operation of what is known as the Conmee Act. It is held in certain quarters that the Conmee Act gives to private corporations an undue advantage over the municipality. This statement, however, is disputed, but whether true or not, municipalities have been able under its provisions to purchase the rights of private corporations, and, as a rule, on reasonable terms. If experience has

shown that the Conmee Act imposes unreasonable terms upon a corporation, or contains machinery difficult of application, then it should be amended and with that the Legislature can deal when the opportunity offers.

Any one who considers the great interests with which the Liberal platform deals must be impressed with the sound judgment of the Convention and its firm grasp of the most important issues just now within the range of practical politics, and by way of contrast it might be interesting to place side by side with this platform the policy first of the Conservative Conference and secondly the policy of the leader of the Opposition as enunciated at Napanee. An extraordinary circumstance in this connection is that the Conservatives have two policies, one framed by a Conference and the other framed by the leader, and of the two, it is hard to tell which is the weaker one. I will take the Conference policy first :—

Platform of Conservative Conference.

Plank 1 recommends the establishment of a local mining office in each mining district.

The Conference, in adopting this plank, forgot that three mining offices were already established: one at Rat Portage, one at Michipicoton, and one at Sudbury, and that another was recently opened at the Sault. So this plank is merely borrowed from the policy of the Liberal party.

Plank 2. That the settler should have the timber and minerals on his land, subject to certain restrictions.

This has been in substance the policy of the Government for the last twenty years, which the Liberal Convention recommended to be modified somewhat as to the reservation of minerals in patents granted by the Crown.

Plank 3 approved of Public Ownership.

This was also the Liberal policy for a quarter of a century.

Plank 4 endorses Mr. Whitney's action in declining proposals of coalition made to him.

As a matter of fact proposals for a coalition were never made by me or by any person on my authority.

Plank 5 recommended the distribution of bulletins on timely agricultural topics among the Public Schools of the Province.

This is but a trifling and comparatively useless addition to the agricultural education now carried on in Public Schools and in Normal and Model Schools. Nearly two million bulletins and reports were distributed by the Agricultural Department in the last five years.

Plank 6 asked that the interest on money loaned for tile and municipal drainage should be no higher than the actual cost thereof to the Province.

This plank was quite unnecessary as the rate charged municipalities is the rate now paid by the Province.

Plank 7 referred to the inspection of factories and prison-made goods and the settlement of labour disputes.

In the face of existing legislation and the practice of the Government, this plank is also unnecessary. Although prison-made goods are not so labelled, they are of such a character as to come in competition in a very limited sense with free labour.

Plank 8 expressed sympathy with temperance and moral reform.

An utterly useless expression so far as legislation is concerned.

Plank 9 objected to Orders-in-Council injuriously affecting the prospector, miner and settler, etc.

No such Orders have been passed except where the individual interests are to be subordinated to the public good.

If from this platform is eliminated the policy of the Liberal Party on various topics enumerated, the platform will be so narrow and so purposeless that no Party having any respect for itself would ever present it to a discriminating public. Many a Municipal Councillor appeals to the country on broader issues, and this must have been Mr. Whitney's own opinion, for in his Napanee speech he practically ignored the Party platform and enunciated a new policy possessed of no more originality than that adopted by the Conference. Here are the points as far as they can be gathered from the newspaper reports :—

Mr. Whitney's Platform.

(1) Law Reform :

On this point Mr. Whitney is delightfully obscure. "Division Courts should be relieved of many anomalies, litigation expedited and appeals reduced to one in the Province." If Mr Whitney thinks that he can carry the country with him on that Measure of law reform it is somewhat extraordinary that two or three years ago he acquiesced in the withdrawal of a Bill dealing with Division Courts and other legal anomalies, which the Attorney-General had kept before the House for several weeks.

(2) The development of New Ontario :

That has been carried on without much sympathy or support from Mr. Whitney or his followers.

(3) Railway grants should only be made for development or colonization purposes :

That has been the policy of the Liberal Party for twenty years.

(4) The abolition of the bonus system for railway construction :

How railways can be built into unproductive territory without aid, Mr. Whitney has failed to explain.

(5) Encouragement in the development and refining of mineral ores:

This is rather a strange declaration of policy in the face of Mr. Whitney's opposition to the revival of the Sault industries.

(6) A Minister for New Ontario:

This again is an imitation of the policy of the Liberal Convention.

(7) The surveys of the timber reserves and the disposal of pulp wood by public competition.

This also was agreed to at the Liberal Convention.

(8) Proper investigation into and dealing with the finances of the Province:

This is already provided for by a Provincial Auditor and a Public Accounts Committee.

(9) Increasing the grants for agriculture, particularly with a view to the establishment of additional schools:

Here Mr. Whitney has forgotten that the grants to agriculture in the last thirty years have been increased from $70,858 in 1872 to $397,756 in 1904, and also that he voted against the establishment of a dairy school in Western Ontario.

(10) The establishment of a Consultative Board of teachers to advise the Minister of Education:

This has been the law for five years.

(11) Revision of the Municipal and Assessment Law:

The Assessment law was revised last session and the Municipal law the session before the last.

(12) Testing Government operation of railways with the new Government Railway:

The experience of the Dominion Government with the Intercolonial would scarcely warrant such an experiment.

(13) Aiding proper system of sewerage for small towns and villages.

There is some originality about this proposition.

(14) Placing the Public Accounts in Schools and Churches.

This is certainly original, but would probably require the sanction of religious bodies before it could be put into operation.

A Useless Platform.

In looking over these two platforms, the Conference platform and the leader's platform, one is unable to say which contains the least original matter. What is truly meritorious and substantial is borrowed from the Liberal platform. The real cause of its weakness is, however, to be attributed more to the manner in which the platform was made.

It is in no true sense of the word a party platform. The Conference was not a representative body like the Liberal Convention. Had it been a Conference of the Conservative Party, the platform would have been, doubtless, much more comprehensive. Should a change of leader occur, the Party would not be bound either by Mr. Whitney's declarations of policy or by the declarations of the Conference, which was called at his suggestion. It is for the people of Ontario to say whether the great Liberal Convention that spoke for the whole Party, and submitted a policy of a progressive character, clear-cut and statesmanlike in every respect, or the Conservative Party that in the main were mere imitators of what Liberals had done or proposed to do, that showed no initiative or capacity for constructive legislation, is most worthy of being entrusted with the government of Ontario.